

## **The Story – Chapter 4**

### **Introduction**

This week we enter the second book of the Bible – Exodus, which continues the story of God’s redemptive plan through God’s chosen people. If you don’t have The Story book, you can read Exodus chapters 1-7 and 10-17.

### **Chapter 4 – Moses: Let My People Go**

In chapter 3, we looked at how God rescued his fledging people from a famine by moving them to safety in Egypt. However, after Joseph and the Pharaoh who knew Joseph died, things started going downhill for the Israelites.

As we pick up the story, four hundred years have passed since Joseph’s family came to Egypt, and the Israelites were suffering as slaves under the current Pharaoh. Moses, the one whom God will select to deliver God’s people from Egypt, was born during the rule of a Pharaoh who required that all baby Hebrew boys be killed. However, Moses life was spared when Pharaoh’s daughter rescued him from the Nile and then raised him as her own son.

Moses grew up in the palace but was seemingly still sympathetic to the plight of his people. When he killed an Egyptian taskmaster and was forced to flee, Moses became a refugee in the land of Midian where he married and began tending his father-in-law’s flocks. After 40 years (when Moses was about 80), he encountered a burning bush, through which God spoke to him and commissioned him to be Israel’s deliverer. Moses doubted his own qualifications and abilities, but God responded with the guarantee of God’s presence.

Moses returned to Egypt with the promise of God and the support of his brother Aaron. As expected, Moses’ demands of freeing the Hebrews were met with Pharaoh’s stubborn refusal. So God sent a series of plagues and a cycle of challenge began: the plague strikes, Pharaoh relents; the plague stops, Pharaoh changes his mind. Then a final plague – the death of the firstborn – occurred throughout Egypt except in those Hebrew households where the doorposts of the house were covered with lamb’s blood. That night the angel of death would come and “pass over” the blood stained houses, preserving the lives of those inside.

The Hebrews left Egypt, but later an enraged Pharaoh took off in pursuit. Trapped between his powerful army on one side and the Red Sea on the other, Egypt’s victory appeared certain. But God split the sea in two and the people walked to safety on dry land. When Pharaoh’s army followed, the seas returned and the army was destroyed.

Israel then embarked on what turned out to be a very long journey to the Promised Land. Early on, the people began grumbling over the lack of water and food, but God again proved faithful by providing water, manna, and quail to sustain them.

The story of God's people had just begun. And in God's deliverance of his people from Egypt, we see a hint of things to come, as many years later, Jesus would come as God's perfect Passover Lamb and secure deliverance for all people.

## **Discussion Questions**

As you read, remember there are discussion questions for each chapter beginning on page 473 of the book and also questions that can be found on The Story bookmark (which are also on our website). Also, feel free to consider some of the questions below:

### **Moses**

1. When God calls Moses from the burning bush and reveals he will be sending Moses to speak to the mighty pharaoh of Egypt Moses feels inadequate. Moses begs God to select some else. Instead God tells Moses he will empower him and also raise up his brother Aaron to help him. Have you ever felt God was calling you to work for God in the world, but been fearful that you could not accomplish what God was asking of you? At those times, have you ever discovered strengths you did not know you had either in yourself or in those in the community around you that helped you live into God's purpose?

2. When Moses asked for God's "official" name, God replied: I AM WHO I AM. Why do you think God identified himself that way? What is the significance of that name? What does this name for God tell us about God?

3. You may never have seen a burning bush, but you probably have experienced "standing on holy ground" – a time when

you definitely felt the presence of God in your life? What was that like? How can that experience help you as you face the daily challenges in your life?

### **Let My People Go**

1. When Moses tells Pharaoh to set the Israelites free, Pharaoh responds by increasing their workload. Can you think of a time when you were obedient to God, but the situation worsened instead of improved? How did you react? Are there any lessons you can learn from this situation?

2. This is another one of those difficult stories for me. I wonder why so much suffering took place before the Israelites were allowed to leave Egypt? It becomes even more confusing when I read that periodically " God hardened Pharaoh's heart." (See for example, The Story at p. 50) Why do you think God would do that? How does that square with the God you know?

3. Only days after being set free, the Israelites complain, saying they want to go back. Have you ever been tempted to return to a past way of life, even when you know it will be destructive? What happened? What lessons can you learn from that experience?

## **Overall**

1. God provides food and water for the Israelites while they are wandering in the desert. Can you think of a time when God met your need (emotionally, physically, spiritually, financially, etc.) in an unexpected way. How did this impact you and those around you?

2. We all have our "I could never" and "I hope God never asks me to . . ." moments. Where are the places you tend to resist God's call in your life? What things are you sure you could never do? Is there anything about Moses story that helps you with your own moments of insecurity and doubt?

3. What questions came up for you while you were reading this chapter?